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12
DARK HORSE
COMICS
DARK HORSE COMICS
DEREK THOMPSON 92

DARK HORSE COMICS™

ALIENS:
BACKSPLASH
PART 1 OF 2
WRITER: JIM WOODRING
ARTIST: KILIAN PLUNKETT
LETTERER: ELLIE DE VILLE
COLORIST: MATT HOLLINGSWORTH

PREDATOR:
THE PRIDE AT NGHASA
PART 3 OF 3
WRITER: CHUCK DIXON
ARTIST: ENRIQUE ALCATENA
LETTERER: CLEM ROBINS
COLORIST: CHRIS CHALENOR

PREDATOR:
BAD BLOOD
PART 1 OF 3
WRITER: EVAN DORKIN
PENCILLER: DEREK THOMPSON
INKER: ANDE PARKS
COLORIST: ROBBIE BUSCH

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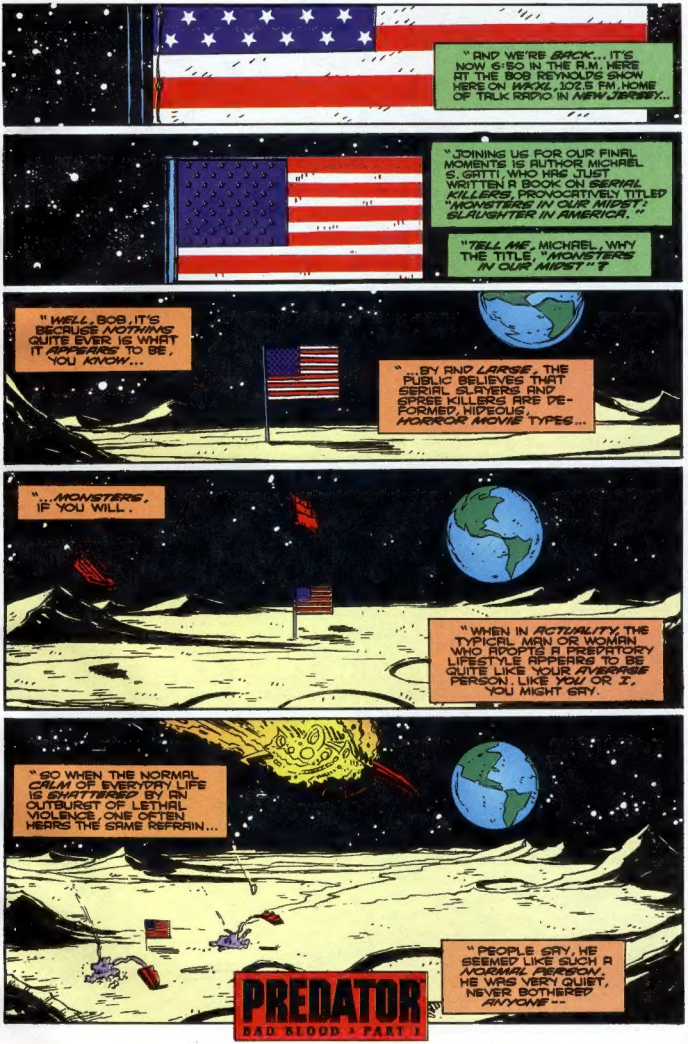
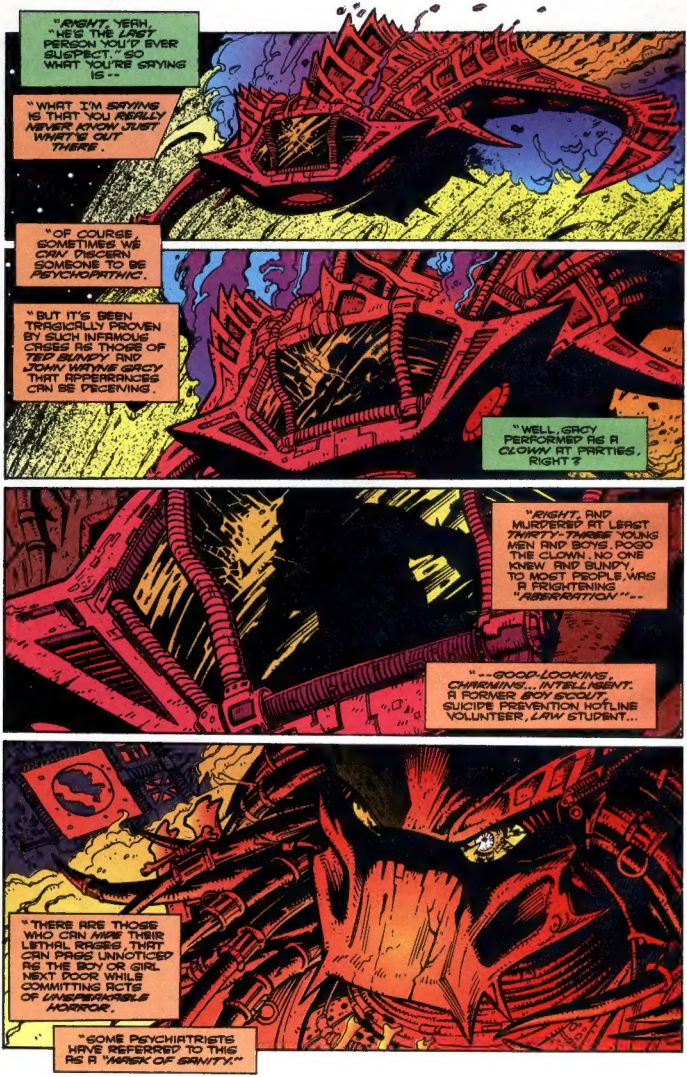
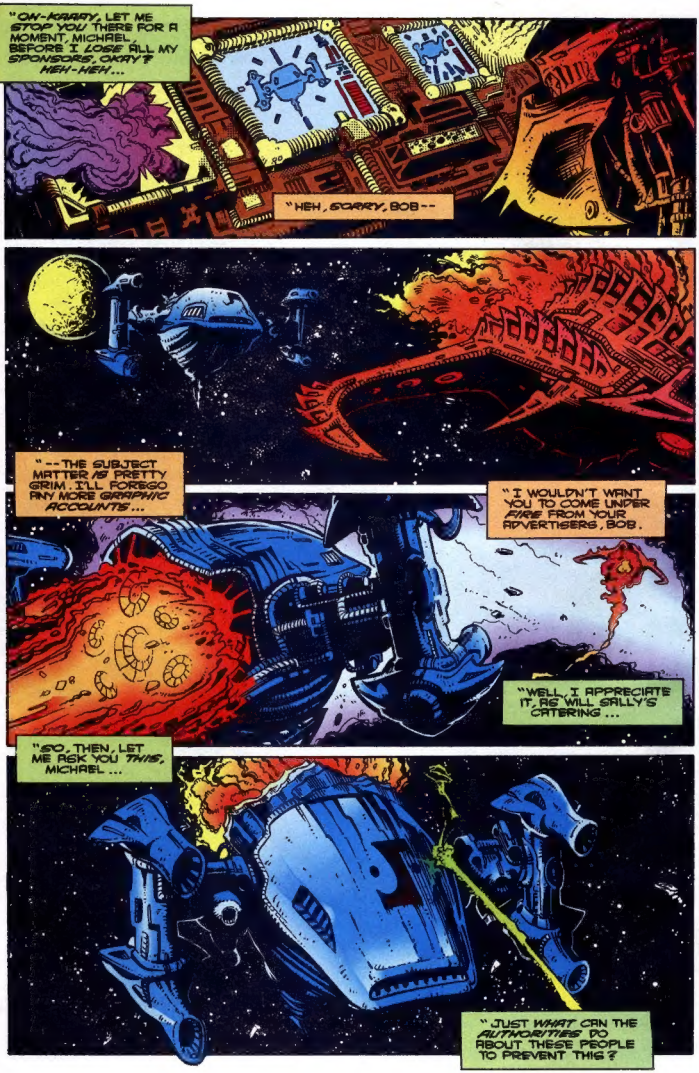
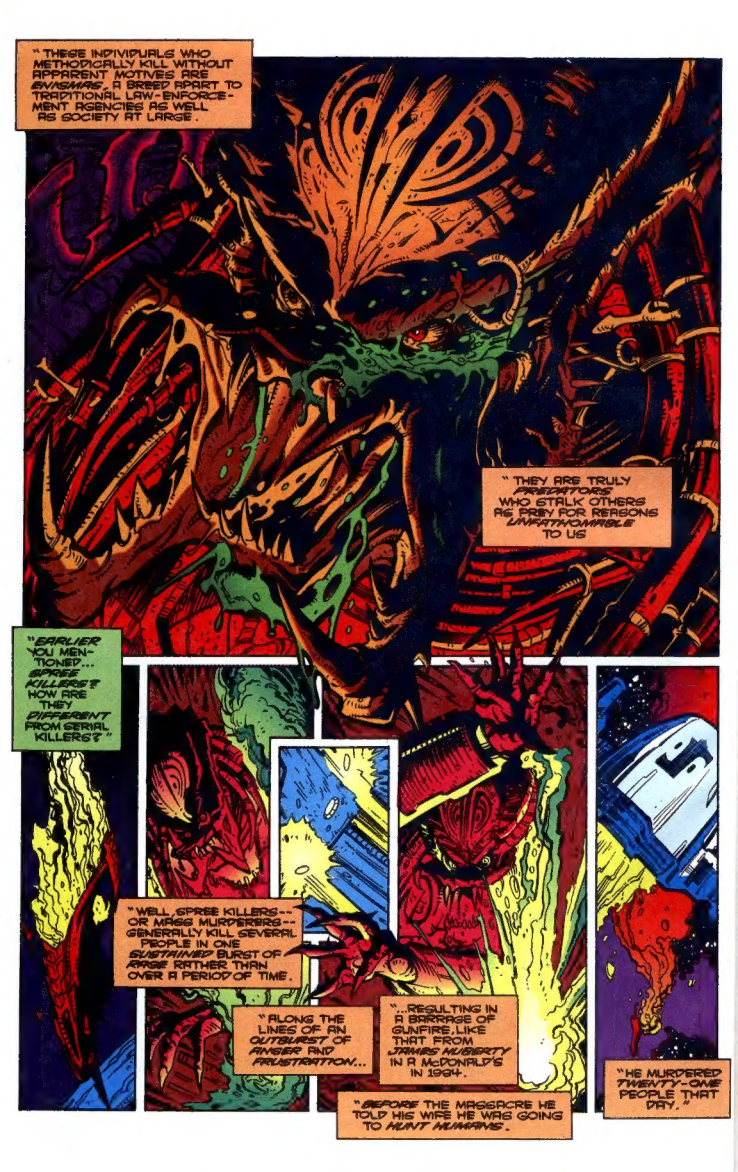

"AND WE'RE BACK... IT'S NOW 6:50 IN THE A.M. HERE AT THE BOB REYNOLDS SHOW HERE ON WAXL, 102.5 FM, HOME OF TALK RADIO IN NEW JERSEY...
"JOINING US FOR OUR FINAL MOMENTS IS AUTHOR MICHAEL S. GRITTI, WHO HAS JUST WRITTEN A BOOK ON SERIAL KILLERS, PROVOCATIVELY TITLED "MONSTERS IN OUR MIDST: SLAUGHTER IN AMERICA."
"TELL ME, MICHAEL, WHY THE TITLE, "MONSTERS IN OUR MIDST"?
"WELL, BOB, IT'S BECAUSE NOTHING QUITE EVER IS WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE, YOU KNOW...
"...BY AND LARGE, THE PUBLIC BELIEVES THAT SERIAL SLAYERS AND SPREE KILLERS ARE DEFORMED, HIDEOUS, HORROR MOVIE TYPES...
"...MONSTERS, IF YOU WILL.
"WHEN IN ACTUALITY THE TYPICAL MAN OR WOMAN WHO ADOPTS A PREDATORY LIFESTYLE APPEARS TO BE QUITE LIKE YOUR AVERAGE PERSON. LIKE YOU OR I, YOU MIGHT SAY.
"SO WHEN THE NORMAL CALM OF EVERYDAY LIFE IS SHATTERED BY AN OUTBURST OF LETHAL VIOLENCE, ONE OFTEN HEARS THE SAME REFRAIN...
"PEOPLE SAY, HE SEEMED LIKE SUCH A NORMAL PERSON. HE WAS VERY QUIET, NEVER BOTHERED ANYONE..."
PREDATOR
BAD BLOOD • PART 1


"RIGHT, YEAH, "HE'S THE LAST PERSON YOU'D EVER SUSPECT." SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS --
"WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT YOU REALLY NEVER KNOW JUST WHAT'S OUT THERE.
"OF COURSE, SOMETIMES WE CAN DISCERN SOMEONE TO BE PSYCHOPATHIC.
"BUT IT'S BEEN TRAGICALLY PROVEN BY SUCH INFAMOUS CASES AS THOSE OF TED BUNDY AND JOHN WAYNE GACY THAT APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING.
"WELL, GACY PERFORMED AS A CLOWN AT PARTIES, RIGHT?
"RIGHT, AND MURDERED AT LEAST THIRTY-THREE YOUNG MEN AND BOYS. POGO THE CLOWN. NO ONE KNEW AND BUNDY, TO MOST PEOPLE, WAS A FRIGHTENING "ABERRATION"...
"--GOOD-LOOKING, CHARMING... INTELLIGENT. A FORMER BOY SCOUT. SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE VOLUNTEER, LAW STUDENT...
"THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARM THEIR LETHAL RAGES, THAT CAN PASS UNNOTICED AS THE BOY OR GIRL NEXT DOOR WHILE COMMITTING ACTS OF UNSPEAKABLE HORROR.
"SOME PSYCHIATRISTS HAVE REFERRED TO THIS AS A "MASK OF SANITY."

"THIS APPEARANCE OF NORMALITY, THIS "MASK," CAN HIDE THE FACE OF UN-RELENTING, SENSELESS, CHAOTIC SLAUGHTER.
"YOUR AVERAGE HUMAN BEING WOULD BE HORRIFIED BY THE ATROCITIES SOME OF THESE SO-CALLED MONSTERS" ARE CAPABLE OF
"MOVIES AND BOOKS RARELY ARE AS GRUESOME AS THESE REAL-LIFE HORRORS. BRIAN DOYLE MULLER RAPED AND MURDERED TWENTY-SEVEN BOYS. ED KEMPER WAS A TWO-HUNDRED-EIGHTY-POUND NECROPHILIAC WITH A NEAR-GENIUS I.Q. HE KILLED TEN WOMEN, THE NEXT TO LAST BEING HIS OWN MOTHER. ALBERT FISH WAS A SEEMINGLY UNASSUMING OLD MAN WHO DISEMBOWELED AND ATE HIS VICTIMS. AND OF COURSE, JEFFREY DAHMER...


"OH-KAARY, LET ME STOP YOU THERE FOR A MOMENT, MICHAEL, BEFORE I LOSE ALL MY SPONSORS, OKAY? HEH-HEH...
"HEH, SCARY, BOB--
"--THE SUBJECT MATTER IS PRETTY GRIM. I'LL FORGO ANY MORE GRAPHIC ACCOUNTS...
"I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO COME UNDER FIRE FROM YOUR ADVERTISERS, BOB.
"WELL, I APPRECIATE IT. AS WILL SALLY'S CATERING...
"SO, THEN, LET ME ASK YOU THIS, MICHAEL...
"JUST WHAT CAN THE AUTHORITIES DO ABOUT THESE PEOPLE TO PREVENT THIS?

"WELL, AUTHORITIES *ARE* AWARE OF THESE PEOPLE...
"...AND THEY *ARE* ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH IT.
"BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO PREVENT MOST SERIAL SLAYINGS...
"SOMETIMES A KILLER MUST STRIKE SEVERAL TIMES IN ORDER TO GIVE THE AUTHORITIES THE CLUES--
"--WHICH ENABLE THEM TO TRACK DOWN AND *ELIMINATE* THE MENACE TO SOCIETY.


"THESE INDIVIDUALS WHO METHODICALLY KILL WITHOUT APPARENT MOTIVES ARE *BUSHWARS*, A BREED APART TO TRADITIONAL LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AS WELL AS SOCIETY AT LARGE.
"THEY ARE TRULY *PREDATORS* WHO STALK OTHERS AS PREY FOR REASONS *UNFATHOMABLE* TO US.
"*EARLIER* YOU MENTIONED... *SPREE KILLERS*? HOW ARE THEY *DIFFERENT* FROM SERIAL KILLERS?"
"WELL, SPREE KILLERS--OR MASS MURDERERS--GENERALLY KILL SEVERAL PEOPLE IN ONE *SUSTAINED* BURST OF *RAGE* RATHER THAN OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.
"ALONG THE LINES OF AN *OUTBURST OF ANGER AND FRUSTRATION*...
"...RESULTING IN A BARRAGE OF GUNFIRE, LIKE THAT FROM *JAMES HUBERTY* IN A McDONALD'S IN 1984.
"HE MURDERED *TWENTY-ONE* PEOPLE THAT DAY."
"BEFORE THE MASSACRE HE TOLD HIS WIFE HE WAS GOING TO *HUNT HUMANS*.

I REMEMBER THAT INCIDENT--
--THAT'S LIKE THE GUY IN THE RESTAURANT IN TEXAS--
GEORGE HENNARD, SHOT TWENTY-TWO.
LUBY'S RESTAURANT...
WHO THE HELL LEFT THE LIGHTS ON?
OH, IT'S YOU, CHRIS. YOU'RE IN BRIGHT AND EARLY.
UH, YEAH... WE GOT A BIG GROUP COMIN' IN TODAY.
I KNOW. ONE OF THEM CALLED AND RESERVED THE AK-47. I HAD TO FIX IT LAST NIGHT AT HOME.
SOME OLD LADY OUTSIDE THE 7-11 ALMOST HAD A STROKE WHEN SHE SAW IT IN THE JEEP. I HAD TO SHOW HER IT WAS A PAINT PELLET GUN.
--AMERICA, BECAUSE OVER THREE QUARTERS OF THE WORLD'S SERIAL--
SSHHHSSHH
DAMN STATIC!
MMMM. I WAS LISTENING TO THIS! GODDAMN INTERFERENCE!
CHRIS! DON'T GET YOURSELF IN AN UPROAR, MAN--

"YOU KNOW NOTHING COMES IN GOOD AROUND HERE..."
SHK-THOOM
...CUT YOU OFF LIKE THIS, BUT WE'RE OUT OF TIME.
HA! SEE, I GOT IT!
MY GUEST HAS BEEN MICHAEL GATTI, AUTHOR OF "MONSTERS IN OUR MIDST"...
"JOIN ME AGAIN TOMORROW AT FIVE A.M. WHEN OUR TOPIC OF DISCUSSION WILL BE U.F.O.S..."
"...AND WHETHER EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL BEINGS REALLY EXIST. SO LONG, AND HAVE A TERRIFIC MORNING, NEW JERSEY!"

LONG SHOTS

[illegible]

Welcome to the final installment of **Long Shots**. *No, we're not canceling* **DHC** — *there will be an issue next month just like always. However, when you see issue #13 on the stands, it won't look quite the same as the previous twelve. More on the upcoming shortly, right now it's time to reach into our mailbag and see what you readers have to say about the past few issues.*

Fair Warning: *Next issue I begin a new policy of sending random gifts to readers who take the time to write and comment on the stories in* **DHC**. *The gift? Could be a T-shirt, could be an advance copy of a story that won't be published for months, it could be an autographed copy of the issue in question, or it could be something* really *special. One reader per issue will win. Don't be left out in the cold.*

Dear ***DHC*** crew,

Dark Horse Comics #7 was very good. I even liked the ***Star Wars*** story and I am not (believe it or not) a ***Star Wars*** fan. Never have been, either. I am familiar with the story, having seen two of the three movies, but never was into it very much. Even so, I liked the story and the artwork was very good. Having a fine writer like Tom Veitch certainly helps.

Mad Dogs was great. I am sorry to see this one be over. I hope we can see more of Mr. Arcudi's work here sometime.

RoboCop... Well, not bad, but can't we get him in his own comic and see some different stuff in here besides mostly licensed characters?

Predator: **"Blood Feud."** Good story, but the comments on RoboCop apply here too.

Altogether, a good comic, but I'd like to see more than the licensed characters and get some wider variety of material here. I'll be back, though.

Until next time...

Carl Pietrantonio
517 Idylwood Lane
Laredo, TX 78041

Well, Carl, **DHC***'s primary* raison d'etre *is to provide a showcase for our licensed characters. Once in a while we'll run new creator- or company-owned characters in these pages, but most of the features will be culled from our stable of licenses — which should still provide you with a fairly stunning variety. In addition to those mentioned in your letter (***Star Wars, RoboCop, *and* Predator***), we have* **Aliens, James Bond, Godzilla, Indiana Jones, The Thing from Another World,** *and* **The Shadow** *to chose from. Plenty of opportunity for variety, if you ask me.*

Dear Editors,

The stories presented in issue eight of ***Dark Horse Comics*** were excellent throughout. **"Who is X?"** was pretty good. Jerry Prosser wrote an interesting story. As far as I can tell, X is a punisher (don't sue me, Marvel!) of the corrupt and greedy. Steven Harris and Dan Davis' artwork was a bit too sketchy for my taste.

RoboCop: **"Invasions"** continues with its solid scripting and impressive artwork with this third installment. Keep it up!

The first chapter of ***James Bond 007:*** **"Light of My Death"** was fabulous. Not much plot yet, but Das Petrou's writing was pure Bond, and John Watkiss' artwork is very impressive. Keep it shaken, not stirred, in future installments.

Lastly, ***Tales of the Jedi***, part two, was excellent. Can a Hutt Sail Barge travel through space? If not, then how did they follow Nomi in the *Lightside Explorer*?

See you next time. Adios, amigo...

Robert Knaus
320 Fisher St.
Walpole, MA 02081

Editor Dan Thorsland tells me that it's possible for a Hutt Sail Barge to travel short distances in space, but that it is just as likely that the Hutt had his Sail Barge transported from the Jump Gate Station to Thon's homeworld, or even that Thon's planet was also home to the Hutt. Everything clear?

Dear Bob,

I've been reading ***Dark Horse Comics*** intermittently since the debut, and I've taken long enough to tell you how pleased I am. More to my tastes than its black-and-white companion, ***Dark Horse Presents***, the new anthology is one of the best titles Dark Horse has available. And by introducing the first hero of ***Comics' Greatest World*** in #8, the title only got better.

"Who is X?": This was probably the issue's best story. Prosser's script seemed to be merely a primer to the world of Arcadia, and a brief introduction of the character I'm sure we'll be seeing more of. Yet, this did pique my interest and I'm curious to know why these politicians are on X's hit list. The artwork was also beautiful, with a slight Simonson influence. Rachelle Menashe did a nice job on the hues, too. I guess this makes a perfect story.

RoboCop: I've never been too thrilled with this character, so it would be hard for me to compliment **"Invasions"** too much. While I applaud you for using movie characters in this book (more Indiana Jones!) I'd prefer for Robo to stick to regular series, or his movies. The artwork was nice in spots, though.

James Bond: This was another great story. While Das Petrou's script looks to have potential, the art by John Watkiss was splendid. It looks much like that of classic Carmine Infantino, and is perfectly suited for 007. As for Petrou's story, it was enjoyable even for a person like me who really isn't into that many spy stories. Intrigue and action *do* make for an interesting tale, and I'm looking forward to the next chapter.

Star Wars: I've only read part of ***Dark Empire***, but enjoyed the movies and currently enjoy ***Classic Star Wars***. Thus, ***Tales of the Jedi*** is a pretty good story. While the art by Janine Johnson isn't as good as I'd like it to be (Cam Kennedy is a much better artist) the story by Veitch is the glue that holds all this together. Even without C3PO, Chewbacca or Luke Skywalker, this adventure is excellent. How about getting Al Williamson to pencil a new story, even if it was only a one-shot?

Anyway, I urge you to keep up the good work. And as reader Carl Pietrantonio pointed out, some variety (such as humor) would make this title even better. Until next month…

Joey Marchese
P.O. Box 2197
Union, NJ 07083-2197

Three out of four is not too *bad, is it, Joey? Glad to hear you're enjoying the X storyline. Be sure to drop us a line and let us know what you think of the way* **Comics' Greatest World** *plays out in its sixteen issue launch this summer.*

Al Williamson is currently under contract with Marvel Comics, but they've given him the green light to produce new covers (every other issue) and new bridging art for the **Classic Star Wars** *series. Who knows? Maybe we can get Al for a one-shot short story at some point…*

Dark Horse Comics,

Sorry, the James Bond story still does not hold my attention past the first two pages; I've never liked any of the Bond comics and, unfortunately, I don't like this one either. I just don't like the story or art, this is not to say I find either lacking in skill or appearance; just that neither is to my particular taste.

Godzilla! I love this big nasty monster stuff! This is only my second exposure to Godzilla in comics, but I really dig it; who would have thought so cool a monster could almost be upstaged by his secondary characters?

What can I say about X, but that I'm looking forward to this summer's ***Comics' Greatest World***; X visually and expectantly entertains me. I want to know more about him.

I'm tired of Predator and all its various stories… all repetitive and boring.

Thank you,

Toby Mays
3940 Walnut Dr. Apt D
Eureka, CA 95503

I'm sorry the Bond stories are not to your liking, too. I hope you don't mind if we keep trying until we get it right, Toby. Ditto for the Predator stories.

But Godzilla — now you're talking about a character near and dear to my heart! And I have to give Art Adams a lot of credit for his input on the folks of G-Force — they're a blast to write. Look for Big G to star in his own miniseries early next year.

And, as I told Joey Marchese above, all of us here at Dark Horse are anxious to hear your comments on **X** *and* **Comics' Greatest World**.

Meanwhile, be watching next issue for **DHC** *to undergo a major facelift with lucky issue #13. See you then!*

—Randy

ALIENS™
BACKSPLASH - PART 1
REGULATIONS SAY YOU'RE HERE AS BACK-UP FOR THE LEAD TEAM AND TO PROVIDE A RETREAT ESCORT IF NECESSARY.
BUT WHAT YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO DO IS SIT BACK, RELAX...
...AND WATCH RUPP AND HOLLISTER HERE LIQUIFY EVERY ALIEN IN THIS CAVERN WITH THESE NEWLY-DEVELOPED PARTICLE-PLASMA PROJECTORS.
MAKE IT A CLEAN SWEEP, MEN. I WANT THIS PLACE STERILIZED!
AYE AYE, SIR!

OVER THERE!
TUN
TUN TUN TUN
HOLY TOLEDO!
OFFHAND I'D SAY THIS REPRESENTS THE END OF THE ALIEN THREAT.
NO DUH, SHERLOCK!
KINDA TAKES ALL THE SPORT RIGHT OUT OF IT, DON'T IT?

WHOA! LOOKS LIKE THE MOTHER-LODE!
GET 'EM ALL BEFORE THEY SCATTER!
TUN
SPLUUUUURNCH!

OH--
FUH!
KPLOOOSH
WHAT HAPPENED?
HOLLISTER, I CAN'T SEE!
NEITHER CAN I! AND I'M GETTING FUMES!
TUNK!

THE STUFF'S GETTING IN! HOW? THESE SUITS ARE ACID-PROOF!
NO, JUST ACID-RESISTANT... THIS CONCENTRATION... HELP ME! I CAN'T BREATHE!
SIZ
THE TRANSPORT IS DISSOLVING!
GET THIS STUFF OFF ME!
AAAAAAH
MY EYES!
CRESPI! BLOW THE BOLTS ON THAT ESCAPE HATCH!
I CAN'T... WALK!
YESSIR!
WHOOM!
YAAAAAAH!
THE SUIT IS BURNING INTO ME! OH GOD! OH GOD!
SKRUTCH!

FIGHT! FIGHT! KILL THEM, COLONIAL MARINES!
THEY'VE GOT HOLLISTER!
THEY'VE GOT US ALL, YOU DUMB SON OF A BITCH! FIGHT! FIGHT!
MOTHER, I NEED HELP.
AIEEEEYAUGH!!!
HUMPFULKCH!
MERCIFUL GOD, NOOOO!
THIS ... IS HOPELESS ...
KEEP FIGHTING...

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE!
CRACKNCH
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THE LEDGE IS DISSOLVING!
AAAAAACK!
GRAB SOMETHING!
RIDE IT DOWN!
STAY ON TOP!

KERRAAASH!
TO BE CONTINUED.

DARK HORSE COMICS PROJECT PROFILE

ALIENS LABYRINTH

Written by Jim Woodring
Illustrated by Kilian Plunkett

Aliens: Labyrinth, a four-issue limited series from Dark Horse Comics, is the product of an unlikely creative team. The writer, **Jim Woodring**, is a self-taught comics artist who lives in Seattle; he has worked in the comics industry for over twenty years. The illustrator, **Kilian Plunkett**, is a 22-year-old art school graduate of his native Ireland, and marks his comics debut with this series.

Woodring is perhaps best known for *Frank in The River* and *Tantalizing Stories* (both from Tundra Publishing) which have received seven Harvey Award nominations for Woodring and co-creator Mark Martin. Woodring's comics have also been featured in numerous anthologies, including *Pictopia*, *Hyena*, and *The Best of the Decade*. Woodring's most personal, surrealistic work, *JIM*, was recently collected as *The Book of JIM* (Fantagraphics Books); in the preface, Woodring wrote: "I grew up believing that horror is not only fun but sacred. Horror for me was a divine emotion which accompanied the reception of oracular tidings."

Woodring's first foray into writing for comics was the adaptation of Tod Browning's classic film, *Freaks* (Monster Comics). When Dark Horse editor Ryder Windham (formerly of Monster) was assigned to develop an *Aliens* miniseries, he contacted Woodring. "The *Freaks* series was not a standard, traced-off-the-screen adaptation of the film. Jim brought his own sensibilities to the story. He paced his scripts so everything was eerily subdued, then unfolded into a disturbing, truly frightening horror comic. I knew Jim would write a fine miniseries for *Aliens*."

As the first *Alien* film could be likened to a gothic horror story in outer space, **Aliens: Labyrinth** could be read as a murder thriller. The setting is a remote space station, where a group of scientists study behavioral responses of Aliens. The experiments are carefully monitored, and every safety precaution is considered, so the crew is genuinely shocked when a technician is killed by an Alien. A doctor suspects that the death may not have been an accident, and tries to uncover the truth. The murder investigation evolves into a deceiving, sinuous nightmare. "I really wasn't sure how Jim intended to end **Labyrinth** until I read his final script," said Windham. "It surprised me, and put a knot in my stomach."

Since most of the story takes place on a space station, Windham searched for an artist who was capable with technical backgrounds as well as figures. He remembered when he first saw Plunkett's unsolicited art samples. "There were several drawings of fantastic creatures, including a Predator, but what really caught my attention was a pantomime continuity in which a well-dressed man and woman walk through a garden; another man runs into the garden, and his head seemingly spontaneously explodes. The rendering was astonishing. I offered Kilian a tryout for *Aliens* on the spot.

"In the first chapter of **Labyrinth**, the protagonist, Colonel Doctor Anthony Crespi, mentions that he had an earlier run-in with Aliens. I asked Jim if he would write *that* story for Kilian." Woodring and Plunkett produced a kinetic adventure serial, *Aliens: Backsplash*, for **Dark Horse Comics**. "It's more than a little grizzly," said Windham. "Readers will really have to brace themselves for this one."

"I've been drawing Giger's creature," said Plunkett, "since I saw the original *Alien*, which I think is the best film in the series, so it's great to get paid to do it. I hope anyone interested in goo, bizarre extraterrestrial reproductive habits, slime, and teeth will pick up **Labyrinth**."

Woodring expressed similar sentiments: "I hope that **Aliens: Labyrinth** will entertain, perplex and shock readers, and leave 'em lying in the sawdust, clawing at the ceiling, and croaking heart-breakingly for more."

Readers can get their first look at Woodring and Plunkett's collaborative effort, *Aliens: Backsplash*, in **Dark Horse Comics #12** and **13**.

Aliens: Labyrinth #1 of 4 is priced at $2.50, and ships September 21, 1993.

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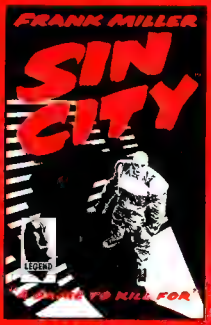
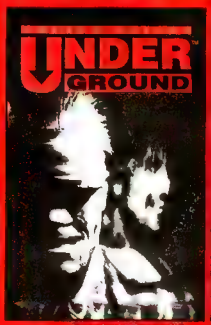
NOVEMBER 1993 FROM DARK HORSE COMICS:

NOT A TURKEY IN THE BUNCH!



FRANK MILLER

RICARDO DELGADO



ANDREW VACHSS

DAVE GIBBONS
MIKE MIGNOLA
KEVIN NOWLAN

STAN SHAW

DAN JOLLEY
TONY HARRIS
JOHNATHAN D. SMITH

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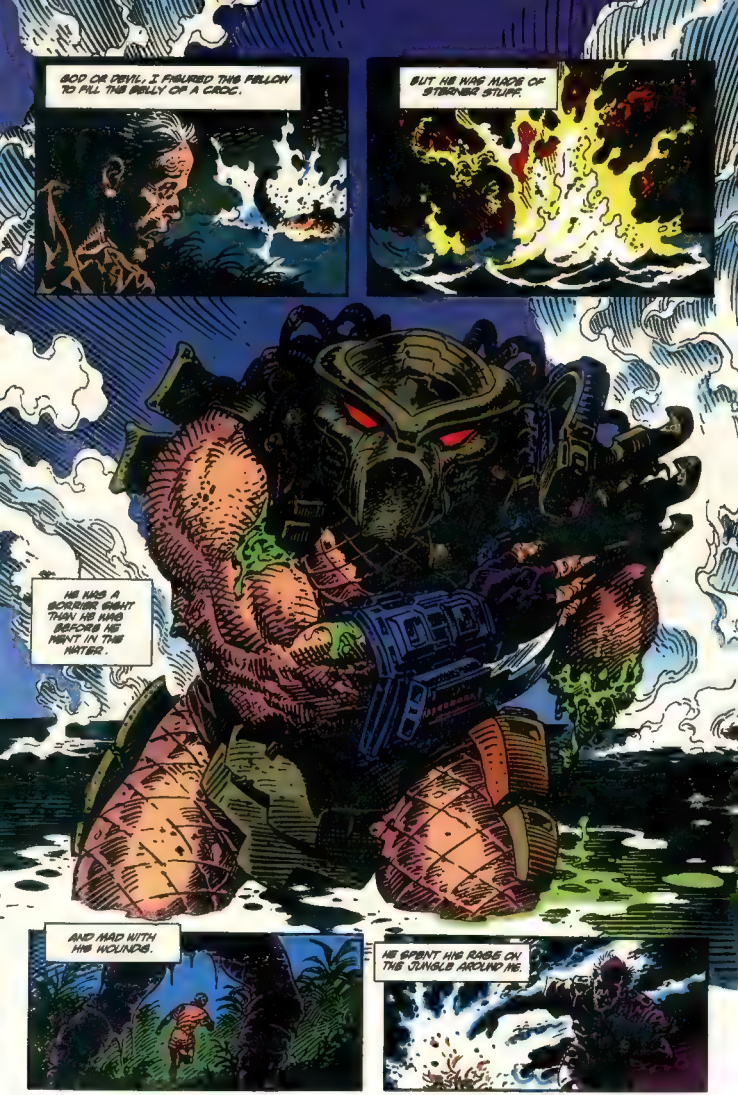
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS!™

SHAITAN.
PU DU YA PORINI.
CALL HIM WHAT YOU WILL, I SHOOT EVIL TO EVIL WITH THE FOREST DEVIL.
PREDATOR
the Pride at Nghasa • Part 3
SIR JAMES, REGGIE, OUR MAN WANJI. DON'T KNOW HOW MANY BEARERS.
ALL DEAD AT THE HANDS OF GOD KNOWS WHAT.
AND ME THE LAST TO DIE.

THE WEASLEY MIGHT HAVE DONE FOR HIM.
BUT I KNEW BETTER THAN THAT.
HE WASN'T ON MY HEELS, BUT NOT BECAUSE I WOUNDED HIM.
HE COULD HAVE KILLED ME AT ANY MOMENT.
NO.
HE LET ME GO.

THIS WAS CROC COUNTRY. THEY'VE THE REAL KILLERS IN THE BUSH.
BUT I'D TAKE MY CHANCES RATHER THAN STAND FOR THAT THING AT MY BACK.
THOSE BASTARDS CATCH MOST OF THEIR PREY ALONG THE BANKS.
BESIDES ALL THAT, YOUR ODDS ARE BETTER IN THE WATER IN CROCODILE TERRITORY.
THEN THEY DROWN THEIR VICTIMS UNDER THEIR WEIGHT.


GOD OR DEVIL, I FIGURED THIS FELLOW TO FILL THE BELLY OF A CROC.
BUT HE WAS MADE OF STERNER STUFF.
HE HAS A SCORPIONS SMART THAN HE WAS BEFORE HE WENT IN THE WATER.
AND MAD WITH HIS WOUNDS.
HE SPENT HIS RAGE ON THE JUNGLE AROUND ME.

THERE WAS NOTHING FOR IT BUT FLIGHT. NOTHING I COULD DO WOULD KILL A CREATURE LIKE THIS I HAD BUT ONE HOPE.
THAT AFRICA ITSELF MIGHT KILL THE BEAST.

I WAS FINISHED, ALL OUT. I'D RUN UNTIL I THOUGHT MY LUNGS WOULD BURST AND MY HEART EXPLODE.
HOPE WAS DISAPPEARING INTO THE AFRICAN NIGHT.
THEN A TWITTERING BARK CUT THE NIGHT
HYENAS. A SMALL ARMY OF THEM.
THE DEVIL'S SCENT MUST HAVE BEEN STRANGE TO THEM.
BUT BLOOD IS BLOOD.
AND BLOOD IS WHAT BRINGS THE VELOT TO LIFE.

THE KILLERS FOUGHT OVER THE PRIZE.
HE WAS NO GOD OR DEVIL TO THEM; NO HUNTING STAR.
HUNGER RULES OUT ON THE GRASSLANDS.
THE HYENAS WOULD BOLT.
THE LIONS WOULD SATISFY THEMSELVES ON THE CARCASSES THAT REMAINED.
I SHOULD HAVE MADE GOOD MY ESCAPE RIGHT THEN.
BUT I HAD TO BE CERTAIN THAT THIS CREATURE WAS DEAD.
HE WALKED ALL NIGHT TO A MUDDY WALLOW JUST EAST OF NGHASA.

I THOUGHT HE MEANT TO DROWN HIMSELF OR FIND RELIEF FOR HIS WOUNDS IN THE COOL MUD OF THE WALLOW.
NOTHING PREPARED ME FOR WHAT OCCURRED NEXT.
THE BOUND ROCKED THE EARTH AND THE BLAST TURNED THE WALLOW TO STEAM IN AN INSTANT.
AND GONE WAS THE HUNTING STAR.
GONE TO TRACK GAME ON SOME OTHER UNFORTUNATE WORLD.
AND GOD'S GREAT MERCY TO THEM.
DIXON—ALCATENA '92

ANDREW VACHSS

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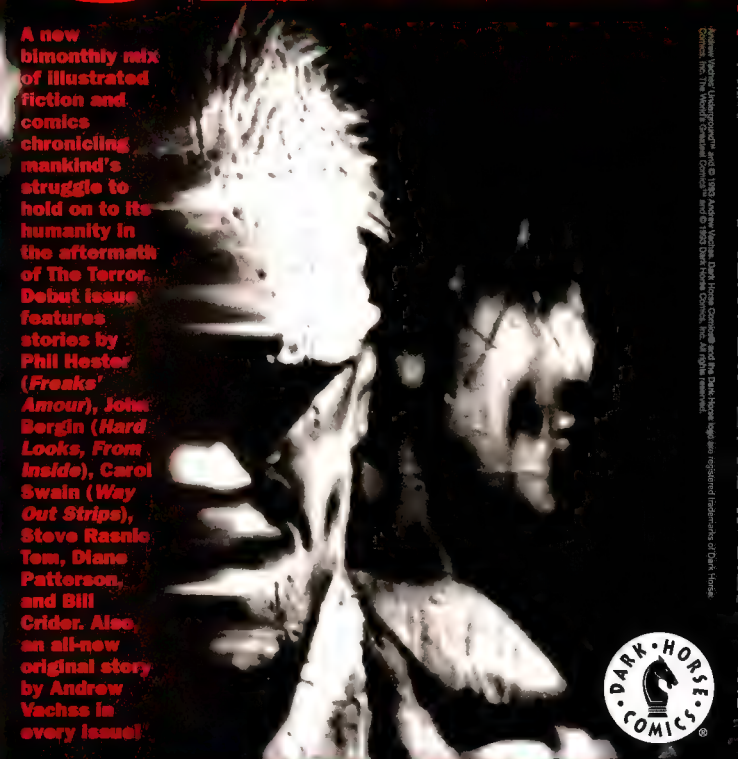

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FINISH LINE

986. I had just landed a clerical job at one of the Big Two comics publishers in Manhattan, a borough of that incredible, thundering metropolis called New York City. Being a native New Yorker as well as a long-time comics fan, I was in heaven. The proliferation of comics specialty shops hit an all-time high, and the publisher I worked for had responded to this by giving comics' creators free hand to push the medium in new directions. At last, the press started to notice comic books as something cool, and I swelled with corporate pride. Heck, even my parents started to respect my "hobby." One day, a staff production artist told me about this small publisher out in Oregon called Dark Horse Comics, and how they were doing really great books. "So what?" I sneered. At the time several promising small publishers were on the verge of going bust. Loyal to my company, I wouldn't think of leaving New York.

1990. I had clawed my way, after four years of toiling for the same corporate machine, into an editorial position. At last, I had my shot at working on the books, and as an assistant to the best editor in comics, started to learn my craft. Things had changed in the industry, and creators were leaving the Big Two in droves. They began charting their own way with the help of vital, aggressive young companies like — you guessed it — Dark Horse Comics. Comfy in my position, I worked at being an editor, feeling a little envious and more than a little old. The corporate grind had worn me down, and my passion had become a profession. Then the phone rang.

1992. It was a day after my birthday, and my first day on the job. That phone call had led to a gig as an editor at Dark Horse Comics, located in a small city in the big, drizzly state of Oregon. I was terrified; I was out of my element, and learning how to do things all over again. No longer a tiny cog in a giant machine, putting books together in assembly-line fashion, Dark Horse gave me opportunities to try anything. Within six months I worked on projects ranging from *Don Martin's Droll Book* to pint-sized comics packaged with *Aliens* toys. Rather than being told to freshen up a property or character that had been in print for decades, I sought out projects that were fresh. Collaborating with creators — rather than bossing them around — made for better books. Truly creator-owned projects don't exist at the Big Two, but at Dark Horse it's the norm. Even our licensed projects are creator-driven at times, with artists and writers lining up to do *Star Wars* projects because they love the material. Isn't that how it should be? When someone as in demand as Art Adams asks you if he could do a book like *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, you know you're on the right track.

The Pacific Northwest is much like Dark Horse; it's growing in leaps and bounds, becoming more diverse and colorful every day. Perhaps that's what has recharged me as an editor, infusing me with a joy for comics I thought I had lost. Out here, the possibilities seem endless and encourage me to take chances; I'll try anything if it seems like the right thing to do, even if I fall flat on my face.

Then again, maybe the rain is starting to drive me crazy — but it's a good crazy!

— Dan Thorsland

AUG. CHECKLIST

SHIPPING AUGUST 10
- ☐ ALIENS VOLUME 2 #13 (U.K. EDITION)
- ☐ CHEVAL NOIR #48
- ☐ THE DIRTY PAIR: SIM HELL #4
- ☐ JOHN BYRNE'S NEXT MEN #17
- ☐ SIN CITY (LIMITED EDITION HARDCOVER)
- ☐ STAR WARS #8 (U.K. EDITION)
- ☐ STEEL HARBOR — WEEK 1: BARB WIRE
- ☐ THE VENUS WARS II #1.5

SHIPPING AUGUST 17
- ☐ CARAVAN KIDD PART 2 #4
- ☐ GRENDEL TALES: FOUR DEVILS, ONE HELL #1
- ☐ LUX & ALBY #5
- ☐ STEEL HARBOR — WEEK 2: THE MACHINE
- ☐ TANK GIRL II #3

SHIPPING AUGUST 24
- ☐ ALIENS VOLUME 2 #13 (U.K. EDITION)
- ☐ JAMES BOND 007: A SILENT ARMAGEDDON #3
- ☐ STEEL HARBOR — WEEK 3: WOLF GANG
- ☐ STAR WARS #9 (U.K. EDITION)
- ☐ UNIVERSAL MONSTERS: THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON
- ☐ VERSION #2.1

SHIPPING AUGUST 31
- ☐ DARK HORSE COMICS #22
- ☐ DARK HORSE INSIDER #22
- ☐ PREDATOR: RACE WAR #4
- ☐ ROBOCOP 3 #2
- ☐ STEEL HARBOR — WEEK 4: MOTORHEAD

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 7
- ☐ ALIENS VOLUME 2 #13 (U.K. EDITION)
- ☐ CLASSIC STAR WARS #1.2
- ☐ INDIANA JONES: THUNDER IN THE ORIENT #1
- ☐ KING KONG VINYL FIGURE KIT

SHIPPING SEPTEMBER 28
- ☐ MARSHAL LAW: BLOOD, SWEAT, AND FEARS
- ☐ THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD A CLIMATE OF FEAR

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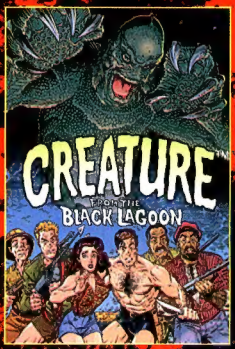
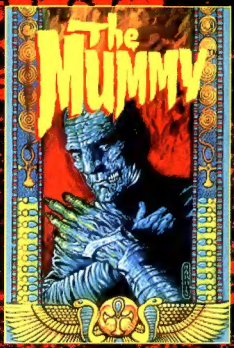


AUGUST

OCTOBER



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